

Historic and Cultural Resources Element

Introduction

The primary source of information for assessment of historic and cultural resources is the 1999 *Preservation Plan for the Town of Amesbury*. Developed by the Amesbury Historical Commission with assistance from planning consultant Alfred Lima, the *Preservation Plan* was the first public effort in Amesbury to assess the community's goals and needs related to historic resources. The plan includes a summary of Amesbury's history and historic resources, details the community's past and present historic preservation initiatives, discusses major threats to Amesbury's historic resources, and identifies strategies and preservation tools to aid in protecting those resources. The Historical Commission also developed a five-year action plan to accomplish the goals and needs identified by the preservation planning process. The information presented in the 1999 *Preservation Plan* for the purposes of this Master Plan was updated through conversations with members of the Amesbury Historical Commission and various private organizations within the community with missions related to historic preservation.

Amesbury's Historic Resources

The community of Amesbury is located in a region of Massachusetts rich in colonial, maritime, and industrial history. In 1996, Congress designated Essex County as National Heritage Area 96, recognizing the significant role the region played in the early settlement, commercial development, and manufacturing economy of the nation. First settled in the 1640s, Amesbury was an active participant in the region's agricultural, maritime, and manufacturing activities. The community's historic resources reflect these regional contexts, as well as the development patterns of a successful New England manufacturing and agricultural community.¹

Amesbury encompasses a rich collection of historic resources that predate and postdate European settlement. Before the first Europeans arrived in the area, Native Americans belonging to the Penacook tribe inhabited much of the land that is now Amesbury. Archaeological evidence of settlement sites within the community has been found at the mouth of the Powow River, the confluence of Presbys Creek and



¹ Essex National Heritage Area, www.essexheritage.org.

the Merrimack River, Buttonwood Road, and sites near Lake Attitash. Many additional unidentified archaeological sites related to Native American inhabitation are also believed to exist within the community.

Much of the historic fabric visible in Amesbury today is the result of nearly 300 years of European settlement. Since the arrival of the first permanent settlers in the 1640s, the landscape has been transformed by agricultural activity, cottage industrial production, maritime commerce, shipbuilding, and water and steam-powered manufacturing. Amesbury has also been the home to several of our nation's most recognized writers, civic activists, and religious leaders.

Settlement patterns first established in the Colonial and early Federal periods persist in neighborhoods such as Point Shore, the Ferry District, and the Training Field area. The most significant grouping of historic resources associated with the early settlement of Amesbury is located in the Ferry District neighborhood. The 1652 Macy-Colby House and the ca. 1692 Theophilus Foot House are important seventeenth-century domestic structures in the region. The Point Shore neighborhood also retains an intact pre-industrial village setting with a strong stock of eighteenth-century housing along Main Street and Andrews Lane. The neighborhood also contains the 1785 Rocky Hill Meetinghouse on Rocky Hill Road, which is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The Training Field neighborhood was the site of some of the earliest settlement in Amesbury and hosted a training field for local militia who fought in the French and Indian War, Revolutionary War, and War of 1812.

Agricultural activity has been present in Amesbury from the earliest periods of settlement, and persists among numerous working and inactive farms located in the Lion's Mouth Road area and other outlying portions of the town. Among the most significant agricultural resources in Amesbury is Woodsom Farm on Lion's Mouth Road. This 350-acre former dairy farm encompasses a significant collection of domestic and agricultural buildings, as well as an intact agricultural landscape. The ca. 1760 Pender Farm on Middle Road is another outstanding example of a working farm centered on a Georgian style farmhouse. Significant agricultural resources are also located on Buttonwood Road, Newton Road, Whitehall Road, South Hampton Road, and Market Street.

One of Amesbury's most important early industries was shipbuilding, which developed in the seventeenth century on the lower Powow River and later along the deep channel of the Merrimack River. The Point Shore and Ferry District neighborhoods are most closely associated with the shipbuilding trade in Amesbury. Lowell's Boat Shop (a National Historic Landmark) and the Andrews Boat Shop are two important resources in the Point Shore neighborhood related to Amesbury's boat and shipbuilding trade. The American Fishing Dory, a popular fishing and recreational boat form, was developed at Lowell's Boat Shop.

The falls on the Powow River attracted heavy mill development during the early eighteenth century as the Industrial Revolution began in New England. Amesbury developed strong textile and carriage manufacturing industries, and what is now the downtown area rapidly grew to become the commercial and civic core of the community. Between the 1830's and the early 1900's, Amesbury became the biggest carriage-building center in the United States. Car components came into Amesbury and trainloads of carriages were shipped out. Carriage making in Amesbury was highly lucrative prior to the depression.

According to the 1999 *Preservation Plan*, the downtown area contains, "the greatest concentration of economic and civic architecture in Amesbury, including manufacturing, retail, civic and religious buildings." The district's diverse resources include an intact development pattern typical of small New England manufacturing towns, featuring the large textile and carriage mill complexes in the Upper and Lower Millyards, and an early hollow frame dam. Market Square is a well-preserved example of a small downtown commercial district.

Most of the civic, commercial, and manufacturing resources in the downtown area are included in the Amesbury and Salisbury Mills Village National Historic District. The Point Shore neighborhood also contains significant manufacturing buildings along the edge of the Merrimack River on Merrimac Street historically associated with the Merrimac Hat Company.

Amesbury's role as a historic manufacturing town, along with its revitalized downtown and scenic rural vistas have resulted in a growing number of visitors to the community. There is a wide array of venues from which these visitors can choose, including (but not limited to): the Bartlett Museum, the Macy-Colby House, the Rocky Hill Meeting House (a Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities property), the Whittier Home, Lowell's Boat Shop (one of two properties owned and managed by the Newburyport Maritime Society), the Amesbury Carriage Museum, the Mary Baker Eddy House and the Amesbury Library Special Collections. Each of these museums has a different mission, role and story to tell, although many overlap artifacts and collections. Increasingly, such activities are seen as an important component in the future economic development of the community.



Building Styles

Amesbury is a community of historic residential neighborhoods. The economic success the community enjoyed as a result of eighteenth and nineteenth-century industrial development produced an abundance of residential buildings rendered a wide variety of forms and styles. Amesbury's residential structures are grouped into distinct neighborhoods that evolved in association with different aspects of the town's developmental and industrial history. Neighborhoods in or near the downtown area, such as Highlands, Carriage Hill, and Po Hill have isolated Georgian and Federal style residences near the center. Notable among these are the

Georgian ca. 1780 George Currier House on Main Street, and 1811 “The Elms” on Friend Street, a well preserved example of the Federal style. The Greek Revival, Gothic Revival, and Italianate styles of the early to mid nineteenth century are also common in the downtown area, and have been applied to single-family and multi-family workers’ housing built near the mills. The prosperity of the late nineteenth century in Amesbury produced a stunning variety of houses rendered in period styles such as Second Empire, Stick, Queen Anne, Shingle, and Romanesque Revival. Hillside Avenue and Greenleaf Street contain many high quality examples of these styles. Popular early twentieth-century styles such as Colonial Revival, Neoclassical, Tudor Revival, Mission, and Craftsman are also present. Outlying neighborhoods in Amesbury were historically a combination of residential, agricultural, and recreational uses.

Amesbury also retains resources associated with important writers and religious leaders of the nineteenth century. The 1811 John Greenleaf Whittier House on Friends Street was the home of John Greenleaf Whittier, one of the country’s most recognized poets and abolitionists and is a National Historic Landmark. The Mary Baker Eddy House on Main Street was where Ms. Eddy wrote many of the founding teachings of the Christian Science faith.



Neighborhoods

The 1999 *Preservation Plan* identifies several key themes and qualities embodied in the town’s historic resources that were of paramount importance to preserving community character. The variety of historical experiences reflected in the diverse resources of Amesbury’s neighborhoods, as well as their diversity of architectural styles, compact placement, and distinctive settings, were recognized as being important to the overall quality of life. These neighborhoods and resources are currently threatened by insensitive or inappropriate treatment by individual owners, and inappropriate streetscape treatment by municipal and/or state agencies. Residential outlying areas face similar threats, as well as threats related to loss of open space and agricultural resources.

The plan also acknowledged the central importance of the downtown business district, with its historic buildings, pedestrian scale, and river views. Like many downtown areas, Amesbury’s commercial center is threatened by a low demand for older commercial space due to modern development patterns that encourage commercial expansion at the outskirts of communities.

The role Amesbury played in the regional shipbuilding industry, as evidenced in the Point Shore and Ferry District neighborhoods, is a major source of pride, and presents a prime opportunity for educational and tourism programs. While Lowell’s Boat Shop has been well preserved and protected, threats to other surviving shipbuilding resources persist, as do threats of development on riverfront parcels historically used for the shipbuilding industry.

Preservation of open space has also been identified as an important issue among Amesbury residents, and the 1999 plan identified the town's remaining agricultural landscapes and historic scenic areas as needing further protection. Farms and agricultural landscapes in Amesbury are threatened by the reduced economic viability of farming in the region, the high maintenance costs and lack of use for agricultural buildings after farming ceases, and increased development of open space. The plan also expresses concern over the threats lack of identification and development projects pose to archaeological resources throughout the community.

Historic Preservation Efforts

Historic preservation efforts in Amesbury span a period of over forty years and have been undertaken by a combination of public and private entities. Strategies employed range from municipal and state regulatory controls to private development initiatives. At the municipal level, the Amesbury Historical Commission and the Office of Community and Economic Development (OCED) are most active in historic preservation efforts. Numerous private organizations and individual citizens in Amesbury have also undertaken important historic preservation projects.

Preservation-Related Bylaws, Regulations, and Planning Initiatives

Amesbury has passed two important bylaws that assist in preserving the community's historic resources and character. In 1990, Amesbury adopted a demolition delay bylaw, which prevents demolition of a structure determined by the Amesbury Historical Commission to be both historically significant and preferably preserved for a period of six months. The delay period provides an opportunity to work with property owners to develop alternatives to demolition. The town also adopted a design review bylaw in 1997 that led to the formation of a Design Review Committee. The Design Review Committee, which includes a member of the Amesbury Historical Commission, assists the Planning Board in reviewing the design elements of new industrial, commercial, and adaptive reuse projects.

Several zoning and land use regulations in Amesbury directly contribute to preserving historic buildings, sites, and open space. In 1985, the town adopted a Residential Cluster District zoning amendment that mandates 10-acre minimum lot sizes in designated areas unless development is clustered. The Amesbury zoning code also uses Office Park Development zoning districts to focus modern commercial development in designated areas. The Office Park Development District bounded by Elm Street, also known as the Golden Triangle, additionally includes an overlay district encouraging the reuse of historic commercial buildings nearby by allowing mixed residential and commercial uses in a single structure. In 2002, the town

instituted Neighborhood Conservation district zoning designed to encourage neighborhood-specific planning and protect sensitive cultural, environmental or historic resources. The first such district was established in the Brown Hill neighborhood in 2002.²

Amesbury has focused significant planning attention on preserving significant open space areas. In 1996, the Amesbury Open Space and Recreation Committee and the Office of Community and Economic Development drafted the *Amesbury Open Space Plan*, which included treatment of historic farmsteads and known Native American settlement sites. The plan was updated in 2002. The town has also taken advantage of state programs to preserve agricultural property and scenic roads. One hundred and five acres of the historic Pender Farm are protected under the Massachusetts Department of Food and Agriculture's Agricultural Preservation Restriction Program. An additional 1,522 acres of land in Amesbury are taxed at agricultural value under the Farmland Assessment Act (MGL Chapter 61A) to discourage incompatible development.³ Pleasant Valley Road, Merrimack Street, and Main Street, from the Merrimack River to I-95, are designated as scenic under MGL Chapter 40, section 15C, which subjects any improvement work within the rights-of-way to a public hearing.



Public Projects and Initiatives

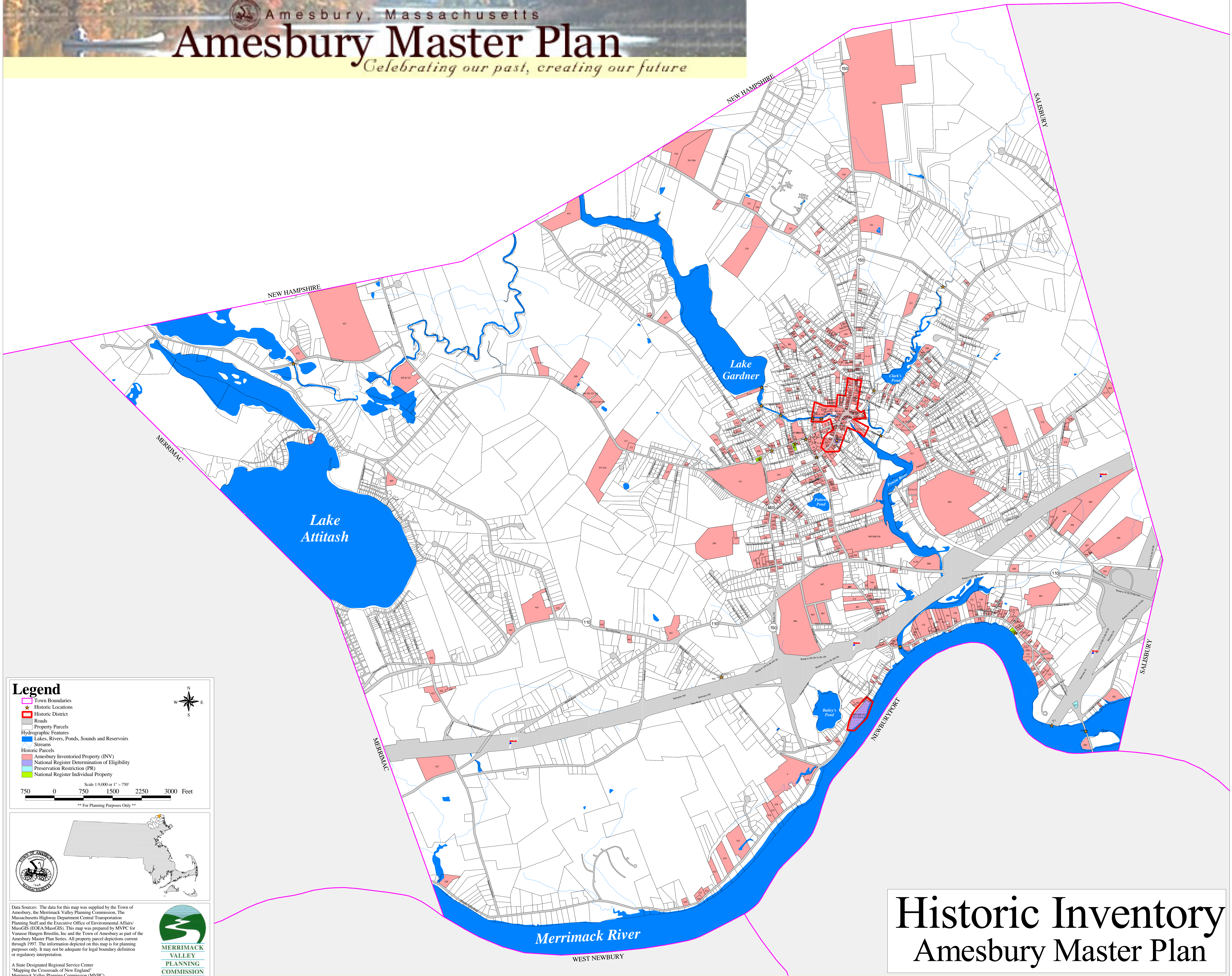
The Town of Amesbury has been active in revitalization and protection efforts for historic resources through numerous individual projects and initiatives. Most of the projects have been initiated and funded by the Office of Community and Economic Development (OCED) and the Amesbury Historical Commission.

Identification of significant historic resources through cultural resource surveys and the National Register of Historic Places program forms the basis of historic preservation planning at the local, state, and national levels. In 1988 and 1989, the Amesbury Historical Commission conducted a two-phase cultural resource survey with the assistance of a Survey and Planning grant from the Massachusetts Historical Commission. The survey resulted in the submission of 600 properties into the Massachusetts Historical Commission's *Inventory of Historic and Archaeological Assets of the Commonwealth* and made recommendations for potential local historic districts, and properties and districts eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. The Historic Resources Map prepared as part of this Master Plan process documents these locations, with a listing of the inventoried sites provided in the Appendix.



² Amesbury Office of Community and Economic Development; *Programs, Projects, and Planning Guide 2002*; p. 32; http://www.ci.amesbury.ma.us/admin/clerk/Council_Action.htm.

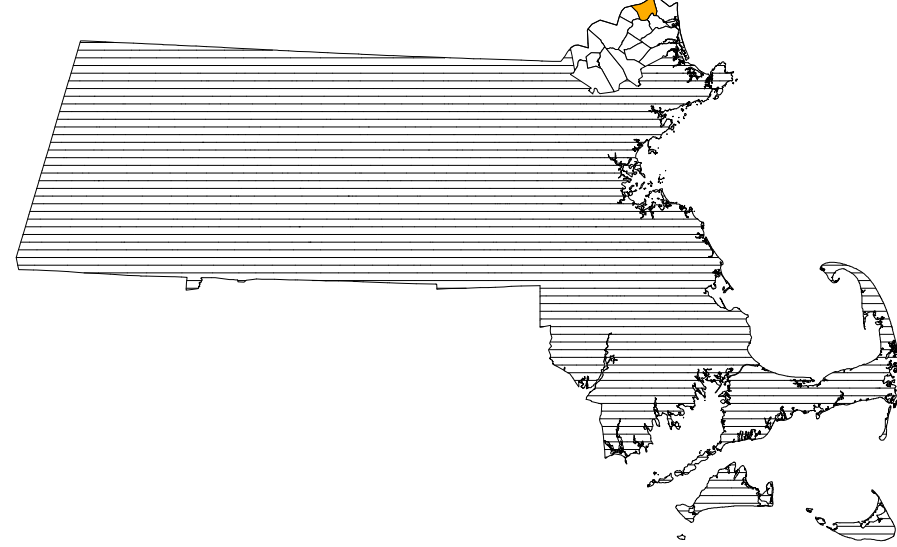
³ Massachusetts Department of Food and Agriculture, <http://www.state.ma.us/dfa/landuse/APR/index.htm>.



Legend

- Town Boundaries
- Historic Locations
- Historic District
- Roads
- Property Parcels
- Hydrographic Features
 - Lakes, Rivers, Ponds, Sounds and Reservoirs
 - Streams
- Historic Parcels
 - Amesbury Inventoried Property (INV)
 - National Register Determination of Eligibility
 - Preservation Restriction (PR)
 - National Register Individual Property

Scale 1:9,000 or 1" = 750'
750 0 750 1500 2250 3000 Feet
** For Planning Purposes Only **



Data Sources: The data for this map was supplied by the Town of Amesbury, the Merrimack Valley Planning Commission, the Massachusetts Highway Department Central Transportation Planning Staff and the Executive Office of Environmental Affairs/ MassGIS (EOEA/MassGIS). This map was prepared by MVPC for Vanasse Hangen Brustlin, Inc. and the Town of Amesbury as part of the Amesbury Master Plan Series. All property parcel depictions current through 1997. The information depicted on this map is for planning purposes only. It may not be adequate for legal boundary definition or regulatory interpretation.

A State Designated Regional Service Center
"Mapping the Crossroads of New England"
Merrimack Valley Planning Commission (MVPC)
160 Main Street, Haverhill, MA, 01830



Printed April 15, 2003 JWD/MDF
Revised Feb. 24, 2004 MDF



Through the efforts of the Amesbury Historical Commission and individuals, four individual properties and one district in Amesbury are currently listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Amesbury is also the home to two National Historic Landmarks: the 1836 John Greenleaf Whittier House and the 1793 Lowell's Boat Shop.⁴

Amesbury's historic Upper and Lower Millyards have been focal points for preservation and revitalization efforts for over twenty years. The first project aimed at redeveloping the mill buildings began in 1977. Known as the Amesbury Millyard Project, the initiative included a residential and commercial façade rehabilitation program in the downtown that was a trigger for the establishment of the Amesbury and Salisbury Mills Village National Register Historic District. Other efforts to reuse downtown mill buildings include a 1979 effort by the OCED to rehabilitate the eight buildings in the National Register-listed Upper Millyard. Four of the buildings were rehabilitated in the 1980s, but economic conditions halted further private development after that time. In 1998, Amesbury commissioned a feasibility study for reusing the remaining four buildings in the Upper Millyard. Buildings in the Lower Millyard are currently in use as mixed industrial and commercial space. In 1998 and 2001, feasibility studies were prepared focusing on maximizing the use of the remaining buildings in the Lower Millyard. The 2001 study proposed developing a transportation center in the Millyard, and that effort is now well underway. Funded by the Merrimack Valley Regional Transportation Authority, the transportation center is currently in the design phase and is slated for completion in 2005. The new facility will also provide space for the Amesbury Council on Aging.

Significant attention has also been focused on revitalizing the downtown area in Amesbury. In 1998, Amesbury undertook a \$4 million traffic, utilities, and streetscape enhancement project for the downtown area, funded by the Town and the Massachusetts Highway Department. An additional \$1.2 million transportation enhancement project to create a Powow Riverwalk and Bikeway in the downtown area is also underway. Phase II of the project is complete and Phase I will be completed in 2005. The OCED and the Alliance for Amesbury operates façade restoration programs in the downtown district, offering deferred payment loans for improvements. Preservation projects are given first priority under this program, and loans can be recaptured if the owner changes the historic character of the building in later years. The OCED also worked with the Design Review Committee to draft a set of Design Guidelines for the downtown area in order to ensure compatible new development and rehabilitation projects.

Individual neighborhoods in Amesbury have also received attention from the OCED. Between 1996 and 1998, the OCED used Community Development Block Grant funds to upgrade utilities infrastructure, enhance a public park, plant and maintain

▼
⁴ Massachusetts Historical Commission, *State Register of Historic Places 2002*, pp. 3-4; National Park Service, National Register Information System, <http://www.nr.nps.gov/>.

street trees, and improve the safety and visual impact of houses in the Congress Street and Orchard Street neighborhoods.

The Amesbury Historical Commission and the OCED are involved in a number of preservation efforts focusing on individual buildings. The OCED's housing program has funded a variety of projects that include the rehabilitation of older residential and industrial buildings, and both agencies are involved in an advisory role in the adaptive reuse of the Merrimack Hat Factory complex by a private developer. The Historical Commission was central in a 1999 effort to restore the 1935 Smith's Chain Bridge Filling Station and convert it into a visitors' center with funding from the Massachusetts Historical Commission's Massachusetts Preservation Projects Fund.

One of the most popular preservation projects the town has undertaken was the 1989 purchase of 379 acres of agricultural land associated with the historic Woodsom Farm from private ownership. The land was purchased for municipal use and is protected as common open space associated with a nearby cluster development. The farm is currently used for passive recreation, though a 1999 report from the Woodsom Farm Committee(s) made recommendations for future development of multiuse playing fields and baseball and softball diamonds.

Amesbury has also taken advantage of the funding and tourism development resources available through the Essex National Heritage Area, providing signage for the Powow Conservation area as one example.



Private Projects and Initiatives

Private organizations and individuals have initiated a number of preservation programs and projects in Amesbury. There are three private organizations in the community with missions related to historic preservation.

- Founded in 1968, the Bartlett Museum, Inc. operates a museum of local Native American artifacts and archival collections related to life in Amesbury, and maintains a former school building and the Point Shore railroad station, now located on museum grounds.
- The Amesbury Improvement Association is a nonprofit organization founded in 1986 to promote the welfare of the community of Amesbury. The Association manages several historic sites in town and funds improvements to public spaces and historic buildings.
- The Amesbury Heritage Fund, Inc. was formed in 1998 to “promote, preserve, and protect Amesbury’s cultural vitality and rich natural and architectural heritage.”

- The Fund seeks to encourage restoration of significant cultural and historic resources in Amesbury and supports endangered historic resources through fundraising, education, and advocacy.
- The Amesbury Hat Museum was formed in 2002. The purpose of the organization is to make students, townspeople, and others more aware of the importance of the Merrimac Hat Factory to the history of the Town; to collect, preserve and display documents, artifacts and products from the Hat Factory for the edification and enjoyment of the public.

Other historic buildings and sites open to the public in Amesbury include:

- **Lowell's Boat Shop**, 459 Main Street. Founded by Simeon Lowell in 1793, the boat shop designed and produced the Gloucester Dorries and other small craft. Operated by the Newburyport Maritime Society and the Lowell's Boat Shop Trust, this National Historic Landmark property is a "working museum" where visitors can see boats under construction.
- **Macy-Colby House**, 253 Main Street. Built c. 1654 by Thomas Macy, the Macy-Colby House is one of Amesbury's oldest homes. It is owned by the Bartlett Cemetery Association and cared for by the local Josiah Bartlett Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution.
- **Mary Baker Eddy House**, 277 Main Street. Mrs. Eddy, the founder and discoverer of Christian Science, was a guest of Sarah Bagley in this home during 1868 and briefly during 1870. She penned some of her earliest writings on Christian Science while staying in this house. The house is operated by the Longyear Museum in Chestnut Hill, MA.
- **John Greenleaf Whittier Home**, 86 Friend Street. This National Historic Landmark property was the home of poet and abolitionist, John Greenleaf Whittier. The museum has been operated by the Whittier Home Association since 1918.
- **Rocky Hill Meeting House**, Old Portsmouth Road. This outstanding example of a traditional New England meeting house, featuring a unique and unaltered 18th-century interior, is owned by the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities.
- **Amesbury Carriage Museum**, Water Street. The Carriage Museum owns many carriages built in Amesbury during its heyday as one of the world's most important carriage-making centers. Some of the carriages are on display in various public buildings around town. Working with the Alliance for Amesbury, they will be located in the Lower Millyard.

- **Salisbury Point Railroad Society**, 270 Main Street. The Society has a collection of photos, documents and memorabilia from various local railroads. The collection is housed in a vintage rail station that once stood on the Amesbury spur of the B&M rail line.

The citizens of Amesbury were instrumental in the preservation of the 1793 Lowell's Boat Shop, one of the community's two National Historic Landmarks. When the boat shop closed in the early 1990s after more than two centuries of continuous operation, Amesbury residents succeeded in lobbying the Trust for Public Land to purchase the property until a buyer who would keep the shop in operation could be found. A partnership between the Trust, the National Park Service, and the Massachusetts Historical Commission resulted in the 1994 purchase of the building by the Newburyport Maritime Society. The Society continues to build boats on the premises and manages the property in partnership with the Lowell's Boat Shop Trust, a nonprofit organization dedicated to preserving the property. In 1996, Lowell's Boat Shop received a grant from the Massachusetts Historical Commission's Massachusetts Preservation Projects Fund for extensive structural rehabilitation.

Private developers have undertaken several adaptive reuse projects in Amesbury, including reuse of the mill buildings in the Upper and Lower Millyards, the mixed commercial and residential development at the former Merrimack Hat Company complex, and rehabilitation of two factory buildings on Oak Street for rental housing.

Cultural Activities

The Woodsom Farm Festival is held annually in September. The one-day event hosts hot air balloon rides, a children's parade, a petting farm, hayrides, costume contests, food, music, and a number of other activities. The business expo tent showcases products and services of local businesses. Admission to the festival is free and families are encouraged to bring blankets and chairs and to spend the day. Local businesses and citizen groups sponsor the event with monetary donations and donations of goods and services.

Amesbury Days are a town-wide celebration held annually in late June/early July. The activities include historical exhibits, music, arts and crafts, shopping, sports, food and dance. Past years have incorporated a summer theater series and a variety show atmosphere on the main stage at the downtown gazebo.

There is a rising demand for artist housing in Amesbury. Numerous housing initiatives are designed to provide affordable live/work space for the local artisan community. The redevelopment in the Upper Millyard included 46 new units for artists. New live/work units for artists were also developed on Cedar Street. Affordable live/work space for artists is key to maintaining Amesbury's creative culture.

Preservation Goals and Needs

The 1999 *Preservation Plan for the Town of Amesbury* identified a number of threats to historic resources, including a lack of public and owner awareness, inadequate information to identify sites and buildings as significant, lack of commercial and agricultural viability, urban sprawl, infill development, and inappropriate alterations. The *Preservation Plan* identified the following eight goals related to improving preservation in Amesbury as a result of the threats analysis.

1. Complete and update the town's cultural resource survey, and initiate a plan to inventory archaeological sites and historic landscapes.
2. Nominate properties recommended in the preservation plan as eligible for the National Register of Historic Places
3. Preserve the historic resources of the downtown, including drafting a plan to redevelop the Upper Millyard, creating a unified urban design plan for the downtown area, initiating a Main Street-type program, and establishing a central site for interpreting and promoting the town's history in the area.
4. Preserve the historic and architectural integrity of Amesbury's neighborhoods through increasing awareness of historic value among property owners, engaging neighborhood associations in promoting preservation, providing resources to aid owners in sensitive rehabilitation treatments, increasing efforts to conserve and improve streetscapes, improving the maintenance of public spaces and buildings, and increasing neighborhood-level planning.
5. Preserve Amesbury's historic landscapes, including agricultural properties, archaeological sites, and river landscapes, through increased outreach to property owners; inventorying historic farm buildings, archaeological sites, and important riverfront parcels; allowing accessory uses in barns; amending zoning bylaws and subdivision regulations to better protect archaeological sites; and establishing a local land trust or greenbelt.
6. Amend or improve regulations such as the Demolition Delay ordinance, zoning and subdivision regulations, design review guidelines, and sign ordinances to assist in achieving historic preservation goals.
7. Increase the public's appreciation of the value of historic preservation through promoting the preservation plan and developing delivery systems for information regarding Amesbury's historic resources.
8. Develop the organizational capacity to achieve historic preservation goals through strengthening private historic preservation advocacy efforts, and creating needed preservation organizations such as a historical society, local land trust, and revolving loan fund. The plan also recommended having an annual "Amesbury Coordination Day" for preservation organizations to set common goals.

Progress Since the 1999 Preservation Plan

The Historical Commission developed a five-year action plan as part of the preservation planning process designed to guide the town in accomplishing the goals set out in the *Preservation Plan*. Each goal was enumerated with various objectives assigned that were each assigned a completion date. Based on the ambitious schedule set by the plan, most of the survey work entailed in Goal 1 and the National Register nominations identified in Goal 2 were to be completed by 2003. Due to drastic budget reductions at the state level, the funding through the Massachusetts Historical Commission has not been available to accomplish these goals. The downtown revitalization tasks detailed under Goal 3 have enjoyed more success. A plan has been drafted for the redevelopment of the Upper Millyard, and a developer has been chosen for project. The request for proposals for the redevelopment included stipulations for creating a central site to promote and interpret Amesbury's history within the complex. Amesbury has not yet created an urban design plan for the downtown area, and there are currently no plans to develop a Main Street-type program for the business district.

The goal of preserving historic and architectural integrity in Amesbury's neighborhoods was helped in 2002 with the passage of an amendment to the zoning ordinance allowing Neighborhood Conservation District zoning. Other objectives under Goal 4 have not made significant progress. Though much progress has been made in preserving open space through Amesbury's *Open Space and Recreation Plan*, little progress has been made on the initiatives focused on historic landscapes detailed under Goal 5. Progress on the objectives for Goal 6 has not yet been quantified. Similarly slow progress has been made with the objectives in Goal 7 relating to increasing public appreciation for historic preservation.

The difficulty in achieving many of the goals set out in the preservation plan is due in large part to a lack of strong private preservation advocacy activity within the community, and the lack of coordination among sympathetic groups. The *Preservation Plan* recognized this weakness in 1999 when it set the eighth goal of the plan: develop the organizational capacity to achieve historic preservation goals through group coordination, the establishment of a historical society, and other groups to advocate for the cause of historic preservation. This goal was met in part in 2001 with the formation of Amesbury Treasures, an umbrella group that coordinates the activities and events of eight local cultural sites: the Bartlett Museum, the Macy-Colby House, the Rocky Hill Meeting House, the John Greenleaf Whittier Birthplace, Lowell's Boat Shop, the Amesbury Carriage Museum, the Mary Baker Eddy House and the Amesbury Library Special Collections. There is still a strong need in Amesbury for a similar model of cooperation among educational and advocacy groups in order to implement the remaining planning goals identified in the 1999 *Preservation Plan for the Town of Amesbury*.

Historic and Cultural Resources Recommendations

The following sections outline the work of the Master Plan Steering Committee and the Historic and Cultural Resources Focus Group to develop recommendations to guide future preservation initiatives in the Town of Amesbury over the next 20 years.



Historic Resources Vision

Reinforce the Importance and Integrity of Historic Resources

Amesbury is a community that celebrates the traditions, architecture, and history of its inhabitants and geography, past, present and future. Amesbury will revitalize and re-utilize its wealth of historic architecture and preserve historic buildings when feasible. We will emphasize the authenticity and historic integrity of the downtown, especially building upon the industrial mill heritage. In so doing we will honor the spirit, pride and determination of our community's origin, while we reinforce the significance of preserving the vitality of Amesbury's historic Village Center. Amesbury will incorporate local history in the educational curriculum to help foster community pride and understanding of the town's heritage.



Cultural Resources Vision

Celebrate and Enhance the Cultural Heritage of Amesbury

We want the citizens and town government of Amesbury to recognize and appreciate the depth and breadth of our cultural heritage, to encourage and foster the community's development and support of a diversity of cultural programs, and to provide a social and economic climate that nurtures creativity in all its forms. Amesbury's cultural heritage should be a catalyst for economic development. We will work to collaboratively promote our community's cultural resources, including coordination with local and regional initiatives. The community should strive to provide cultural and educational facilities that support all citizens, with a particular focus on our youth.



Goals Strategies and Actions

HCR-1	Provide a coordinated approach to protecting and promoting cultural and historic resources.
HCR-1.1	Minimize duplication of efforts through improved communication and coordination and maximize cooperation on important preservation initiatives.
	➤ Retain the services of a public relations specialist, funded through grants, to collect information from local groups involved in preservation and arts/cultural initiatives.
	➤ Create informational materials in a cohesive and appealing format, such as brochures, web sites or periodicals, to help create informational programs that promote the various historic and cultural preservation initiatives.
	➤ Form a town historic or cultural society to oversee historic preservation initiatives and protect historic sites and buildings.
	➤ Develop an annual “coordination day” for the various groups and organizations involved with aspects of historic and cultural resources at the local and regional level.
HCR-1.2	Preserve open space and prevent the unnecessary demolition of historic properties.
	➤ Reinvigorate the Amesbury Heritage Fund with new members, a focused mission statement, and fundraising plan.

HCR-2	Proactively protect important architecturally significant buildings and important sites that depict the Town’s history.
HCR-2.1	Actively pursue initiatives to document and protect historic resources.
	➤ Conduct a survey and identify planning needs related to historic preservation.
	➤ Complete survey of Amesbury’s historic resources for inclusion in the Inventory of Historic and Archaeological Assets of the Commonwealth.
	➤ Identify important archaeological sites for inclusion in the Inventory of Historic and Archaeological Assets of the Commonwealth and take appropriate measures to ensure their protection.
	➤ Prepare and submit new district and individual nominations to the National Register of Historic Places.
HCR-2.2	Preserve the historic resources of downtown as part of larger revitalization effort.
	➤ Officially endorse the Town ongoing initiatives by developing a Main Street program similar to the model put forth by the National Trust for Historic Preservation.
	➤ Develop a central site for historical interpretation.
	➤ Develop artist/artisans center.
HCR-2.3	Preserve the historic and architectural integrity of Amesbury’s neighborhoods.
	➤ Increase owner awareness of the values of maintaining historic properties, including promotional efforts such as the creation of an “historic house plaque” program.
	➤ Gather additional information and resources on techniques for rehabilitating and preserving historic properties and provide it to property owners.
HCR-2.4	Preserve Amesbury’s historic landscapes.
	➤ Identify historic agricultural landscapes and work with the Town or property owners to identify techniques to preserve these areas.
	➤ Work with property owners to preserve historic barns and outbuildings through maintenance, rehabilitation, and reuse.
	➤ Protect historic river landscapes through appropriate waterfront protection measures.
	➤ Enhance historic parks and recreational areas with additional features such as signage, sculptures or other elements that provide awareness and interpretation of historical significance.

HCR-3	Build upon the unique cultural resources within Amesbury to encourage greater interaction within the community and to promote attractions for visitors.
HCR-3.1	Preserve the identity of our community and prevent the town from turning into a bedroom commuter suburb.
	➤ Encourage the establishment of neighborhood associations, based upon the Neighborhood Map, and create a “congress” of neighborhoods where representatives from each can meet, talk about common issues, feel more vested in both the successes and the concerns emerging in individual neighborhoods, and engage in activities that will encourage mingling, etc.
	➤ Develop an annual forum for citizens to learn how local government works and how they can become more involved in a proactive and productive manner.
	➤ Build, renovate or appropriate space in town to hold regular get-togethers where residents can meet and mingle socially (i.e., a community center, Town Hall, a classroom in one of the schools, etc.).
	➤ Develop an infomercial about “the Amesbury story” (perhaps in collaboration with Adelphia) that can be made available to newcomers. Work with realtors to provide the information to new residents.
	➤ Create a “newcomers’ club” or some such group that can tap the energy of new members of the community while they are still idealistic and enthusiastic.
	➤ Develop a non-political community bulletin board or other internet-based communications device for residents to exchange information.
	➤ Give the annual block party more of a purpose or focus, perhaps by encouraging a multi-ethnic food (or music) festival that celebrates the culinary/musical heritage of Amesbury’s diverse population.
	➤ Support efforts to establish an Amesbury Heritage Center/Museum in the Upper Millyard.
	➤ Hold an annual festival (independently, or incorporated into something else such as Amesbury Days or Woodsom Farm Festival) that celebrates the “heritage arts and crafts,” especially those that played a role in Amesbury’s history.
HCR-3.2	Promote local arts and cultural resources to reinforce the importance of personal expression and enrichment.
	➤ Encourage the creation of an Amesbury Art Association dedicated to mounting events, exhibits, and activities that promote greater cultural awareness and enrichment for the community.
	➤ Encourage the public schools to adopt an arts-based curriculum to broaden its extracurricular arts programs to enhance critical thinking skills and provide opportunities for enrichment.
	➤
	➤ Encourage better interaction between AHS and Whittier (perhaps through partial “choicing in” for specific subjects, such as fashion design, culinary arts, computer technology, and high-tech “trades” etc.
	➤ Revise the high school curriculum to include a “track” for arts/humanities oriented students, rather than the current generic system of “honors,” “college prep,” etc.
	➤ Encourage the use of our public school facilities for life-long learning opportunities for all residents, especially for courses for creative expression and personal enrichment (dance, pottery, painting, fiber arts, languages, etc)
	➤ Expand/change the role of “Youth Director” to that of “Community Director, to facilitate the above effort.
	➤ Create a corps of artist volunteers to work in the schools to ensure that school artistic efforts are implemented, regardless of budget cuts or economic flux.

